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EFFECTS OF POWER SECTOR PRIVATIZATION ON THE QUALITY OF ELECTRICITY SUPPLY IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT), NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Reliable electricity supply is fundamental to economic growth, industrial development, and improved living standards. In Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, electricity demand has increased significantly as a result of rapid urbanization, population growth, and expanding commercial and industrial activities. In response to persistent challenges of power instability, the Nigerian government introduced major reforms in the electricity sector, most notably the Electric Power Sector Reform Act (EPSRA) of 2005 and the subsequent privatization of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN). This study examines the effects of power sector privatization on the provision of quality electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory. Both primary and secondary sources of data were employed, while Rational Choice Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. The theory is relevant in explaining the government's decision to privatize the power sector, as it assumes that policymakers engage in cost–benefit analysis to determine the most efficient course of action. The findings reveal that despite privatization, several factors continue to hinder effective power supply in the FCT. These include generation-related challenges such as low generation capacity relative to national demand, gas supply disruptions and pipeline vandalism affecting gas-fired power plants, poor maintenance of existing facilities and the underutilization of renewable energy sources (solar, hydro, and wind) despite Abuja's significant potential. The study recommends the immediate and full implementation of the Meter Asset Provider (MAP) scheme to ensure widespread prepaid metering, reduce estimated billing, and curb the sector's growing debt profile. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to urgently address broader challenges relating to power generation, transmission constraints, distribution inefficiencies, financial sustainability, regulatory and policy weaknesses, as well as socio-economic and demographic pressures affecting electricity supply in the FCT.

Key Words: Privatization, Policy, Implementation, Power Sector, Federal Capital Territory

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the effort to reform power sectors appears to be sweeping across the developing countries at a rate that is similar to that in the industrialized nations (Bacon and Besant-Jones, 2002). The beginning of power sector reforms can be traced back to Chile in 1981, England and Wales in 1990 and Norway in 1991. Recently, the international financial institutions have been advocating for reforms in developing countries as a lending pre-condition. Driven by ideology, economic reasoning and early success stories, vast amounts of financial resources and effort have been spent on reforming infrastructure industries in developing countries (Jamasb, 2005).

Studies have shown that the power sector in many Latin American countries has been deregulated with an increasing level of private ownership and management. For instance, Pollitt (2018) and Littlechild (2018) observed that the performance of the electricity sector in Chile after the reform was incredible, as investment in generation and transmission grew; average industrial and residential prices for electricity fell; and there was expansion in rural electrification and improvement in the quality-of-service delivery among others. The spill-over effects of the improvements were noticeable in the growth of the GDP during the process of privatization and a decline in inflation. However, the development of the power sector reform in Chile and the experience of Colombia and Peru is a continuous exercise. Thailand with a population of 60.95 million of people generates 181,519,000 megawatts; Indonesia with a population of 16 million people has 11,000 megawatts; Malaysia with a population of 32.98 million people has 148, 325.740 megawatts; Singapore with a population of 50.454 million people has 433 watts;

Cambodia has 4000 megawatts, India with 403,759 and Vietnam with 20,000 megawatts among many others (Energy World, 2022).

In many developing countries especially Africa and some Southeast Asia countries, power supply is generally known for its unreliability and high disruption costs which affect production efficiency and competiveness. Africa is indeed endowed with the widest possible range of energy resources for electricity generation such as coal, natural gas, petroleum, solar, hydro, geothermal, nuclear, etc. but the continent's power sector remains severely underdeveloped and the energy consumption in general and electricity consumption in particular are relatively low (Mayo, 2022). The 2021 Electricity Regulatory Index, an annual report covered 43 countries, up from 36 in the previous edition, and assessed their impact on the performance of their electricity sector. The index covered 3 countries in North African region; 14 in West Africa; 6 in Central Africa; 7 in East Africa; and 13 in the Southern Africa region. Nigeria ranked 23rd behind South Africa (10^{th}) and Ghana (17^{th}) (Mojeed, 2021).

Following Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, the government embarked on extensive infrastructural rehabilitation and development programme expansion. It is within these rehabilitation and expansion moves that involves the reforms in the power sector. The power sector as at that time was characterized by myriads of challenges even as it is now. These challenges include limited access to infrastructure, low connection rates, inadequate generation and usage of power capacity, ineffective regulation, high technical losses and vandalism, insufficient transmission and distribution facilities etc. In response to this troubling situation of power generation between 1999 and 2000, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) undertook aggressive rehabilitation of power infrastructures between 1999 and 2004 which was referred to as the Infrastructure Rehabilitation phase of the reform (Lawal, 2008).

The Electricity (Amendment) Decree of 1998 and the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) (Amendment) Act of 1998 initiated the reforms by ending NEPA's monopoly and paving the way for private sector involvement. The main objectives of power sector reforms in Nigeria are to improve the efficiency, reliability, and affordability of electricity supply, attract private sector investment, and create a more sustainable and commercially viable power industry. These reforms aim to transition the power sector from a state-dominated, inefficient system to a competitive market with private sector participation driving investment and innovation. The objectives can be summarized as follows:

i. Improve Efficiency and Reliability: Reform efforts focus on upgrading and expanding infrastructure, optimizing operations, and implementing better management practices to reduce losses, improve power quality, and ensure a more consistent supply of electricity.
ii. Attract Private Sector Investment: A key goal is to create an enabling environment for private investors to participate in generation, transmission, and distribution, bringing in capital, expertise, and new technologies.
iii. Promote Competition: The reforms aim to introduce competition into the power sector by unbundling the former state-owned monopoly, NEPA (now PHCN), into separate generation, transmission, and distribution companies.
iv. Establish a Sustainable Regulatory Framework: The establishment of the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) is crucial for setting tariffs, enforcing rules, and ensuring fair competition among market participants.
v. Ensure Affordability: While attracting private investment, the reforms also aim to ensure that electricity remains affordable for consumers, balancing commercial viability with social needs.
vi. Reduce Government Control: The reforms aim to reduce the government's direct involvement in the day-to-day operations of the power sector, allowing private sector players to take a more active role in driving efficiency and growth.

Privatization was therefore, intended to modernize the sector and allow it meet the country's growing demand for electricity. However, a decade on, the desired outcomes have still not materialized and access to electricity remains a major constraint to economic growth in Nigeria. Economic losses from insufficient power are estimated to be 5 to 7 % of GDP annually. Since privatization, the electricity available on the national grid to light homes and power the economy has remained stagnant at around 4500 megawatts (MW). This level of generation is well below the 8400-megawatt target for 2018 and leaves 45% of the country- or 90 million Nigerians- without connectivity to the power grid. In addition to having limited capacity, the power sector has been operating in a significant fiscal deficit since privatization. In 2019, the annual shortfall in the electricity sector was US$1.9 billion- an amount greater than the federal health budget (Pallavi, Mitchell, Chijioke and Jibrin, 2023).

The weak transmission (Grid) and distribution network inherited from NEPA are still in existence and are not complementing GENCOS efforts in maximizing available capacities to the benefit of the Nigerian consumers. The maximum capacity attained by the national grid ever is 5,375 MW as opposed to the current overall average available capacity, 8,589 MW, and installed capacity of 13,427 MW, with an expansion capacity of 20,000MW in an enabling environment (Udo, 2020). Stranded generated power that could have been made available to Nigerians in the light of maximum attained grid capacity is an average of 3,214MW. "This implies that if we had a grid capacity that matches our average available capacity, 3,214 MW can be immediately made available to Nigerians with the current state of operations of the GENCOS and at no additional cost" (Udo, 2020).

In view of the above challenges, the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading (NBET) was established as the off-taker of electricity produced by the GenCos for onworward distribution to the consumers. It is a government owned electricity Company responsible for purchases of electricity from Generation Companies (GenCos) and sells to the distribution companies through Power Purchase Agreement (PPAs). Despite the establishment of the NBET and available of installed capacity of 13,427 MW generated, it could not be ascertained whether the half of the generated Megawatts are efficiently distributed.

In the case of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, the continuous poor electricity supply has crippled commercial activities in the six area councils, namely Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) Abaji, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kwali and Kuje. Many businesses such as hair dressing, barbing saloon, laundry services providers and hotels, government institutions and higher institutions are facing serious setback due to epileptic power supply by the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC). Most residences in the area have resulted into the use of generator for domestic and commercial purposes. Items such as battery, candle, kerosene, diesel and Petroleum Motor Spirit (PMS) are in high demand.

According to the NBS (2013 and 2023), in 2013 around 60.5% of the population in the FCT had access to electricity because of the numerous grid collapses, disrupting power supply. While in 2025, around 61.2% of the population in the FCT had access to electricity, a slight increase from 2013, electricity generation saw a modest increase, with over 40 terawatt hours generated, the daily average generation was 17.82% higher than in 2015 (which was likely similar to 2013), despite the improvements, the majority of citizens in the FCT still experienced limited hours of electricity per day, with only 1% reporting 24-hour access and electricity sector continued to face challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, gas shortages, and distribution inefficiencies.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that inadequate power supply constitutes a critical challenge to national development and therefore warrants systematic investigation. In light of this context, and in order to address the issues highlighted above, this study examines the extent to

which the implementation of power sector privatization has contributed to the delivery of quality electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Statement of the Problem

The study is an analysis of the implications of the implementation of privatization of power sector for quality power supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The government of Nigeria has made several efforts, such as the privatization of the power sector, in the quest to ensure that power supply is improved. However, despite these efforts, the decreasing level of power sector in the FCT indicates that there are constraints associated with the success of the privatization of the power sector due to what scholars such as Asore (2021) and Adekeye (2024) attributed to corruption and lack of investment in power infrastructure. Some other scholars, such as Anyebe (2021) and Ajenikoko (2022), have ascribed the endemic problem of power supply to faulty regulatory/legal framework, dilapidated/old equipment, poor transmission network, electricity theft, vandalism, and inadequate funding. These constraints have led to a low level of industrialization and an increase in the unemployment rate. From the litany of literature examined, attention does not seem to focus on the poor implementation of the privatization Act. It is against this background that this study examines how the 2005 privatization Act has been implemented.

Power supply in Nigeria has been highly epileptic since independence (Mojeed, 2021). Despite several institutional reforms and structures introduced by the government since 1999, power generation and supply have not seen significant improvement. These reforms include the establishment of the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), the privatization policy, the National Electricity Master Plan, and the Electricity Reform Act. In spite of these measures aimed at ensuring competitiveness in the power sector, challenges in reliable electricity supply persist. A report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2025) indicates that the FCT 33kV network supplied more electricity to the Area Councils before privatization, during the period 2010–2012. In comparison, electricity supply decreased during the privatization era from 2013 to 2025. The energy served decreased at a rate of 12.5% from 50.5GWH in 2010 to 32GWH in 2025. Obioma (2022) argues that every person living in Nigeria particularly FCT has one or two stories to tell about unreliability of the power sector; is it the housewife who looks on dejectedly as she sees the food she has painstakingly prepared turn bad due to inadequate power supply, or the students' frustration and disappointment as they read overnight with candles in preparation for examination, or the upheaval in the hospital as a result of the power failure during a surgical operation, or better still the incessant hum of generators that accompanies you everywhere you go to mention just a few. In other words, it appears that there has been no spectacular change in terms of the operational performance between the pre- and post-power sector reforms in Nigeria despite the reforms.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2013 and 2023), approximately 60.5% of the population in the FCT had access to electricity in 2013. This low access was largely due to frequent grid collapses, which disrupted power supply. By 2025, access had increased slightly to around 61.2%, and electricity generation improved modestly, with over 40 terawatt-hours produced. The daily average generation was 17.82% higher than in 2015, which likely reflected levels similar to 2013.

Research Questions

In an effort towards addressing the research problem of this study, the following questions are addressed:

1. What is the condition of the power sector pre and post- privatization in relation to power supply in the Federal Capital Territory?

2. What are the factors hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory?
3. How has implementation of the privatization of power sector positively affected quality of power supply in the Federal Capital Territory?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the extent to which the implementation of privatization of the power sector has affected quality of power supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja the specific objectives are to

i. To analyze the condition of the power sector pre and post- privatization in relation to power supply in the Federal Capital Territory;
ii. Analyse the factors hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory; and
iii. Examine how implementation of privatization policy has positively affected the quality of power supply in the Federal Capital Territory.

A Brief Review of Relevant Literature

Reliable electricity supply is essential for economic growth, industrial development, and improved living standards. In Nigeria, persistent electricity deficits have hampered socio-economic progress, particularly in urban centers such as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Historically, the country's power sector suffered from inefficiencies, inadequate generation capacity, and poor infrastructure, leading to frequent outages and unreliable service delivery. These challenges undermined productivity, discouraged investment, and diminished living conditions for citizens (Manjo, 2024).

To address chronic instability, the Nigerian government initiated broad reforms in the electricity sector, culminating in the Electric Power Sector Reform Act (EPSRA) of 2005, which enabled privatization of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) and the establishment of regulatory institutions designed to enhance sector performance. Privatization aimed to improve efficiency, attract private investment, and expand electricity access across the nation, including the FCT. However, the quality of power supply remains a significant concern, with reforms yielding mixed outcomes in terms of improved service delivery.

Power Sector Reforms and Privatization in Nigeria

The Nigerian power sector reform process was rooted in efforts to address deep-seated inefficiencies in the public utility (PHCN) and create a competitive, market-oriented electricity industry. The Electric Power Sector Reform Act (EPSRA) 2005 provided the legal framework for sector restructuring, unbundling PHCN into separate generation (GenCos), transmission (TCN), and distribution (DisCos) companies. It also established regulatory agencies such as the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) and the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Company (NBET) to guide sector regulation and market development.

Privatization was designed to stimulate private sector investment and improve operational efficiency by transferring ownership of GenCos and DisCos to private operators through competitive bidding. Although the reform attracted investment and modern business practices, many anticipated benefits—such as improved access to electricity and generation capacity increases—have not materialized to the expected extent. Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, inefficiencies in generation and financial constraints continue to impede progress.

Theoretical Perspectives:

Rational Choice Theory has been applied in the literature to explain the government's decision to privatize the power sector. The theory assumes that policymakers engage in cost–benefit analysis to adopt strategies perceived to maximize efficiency and improve outcomes in sectors burdened by inefficiency and fiscal strain.

Post-Privatization Outcomes and Empirical Findings

Studies assessing power sector performance following privatization reveal mixed and often underwhelming results. Many analyses indicate that post-privatization improvements in electricity supply have been limited despite structural reforms:

- Research focusing on distribution companies in Ibadan and Ikeja finds no significant improvement in electricity supply quality, metering, billing, load shedding, and customer responsiveness post-privatization, suggesting that privatization has not achieved its intended outcomes in those regions.
- A study on the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry reports peak generation and distribution far below national demand and continuing infrastructural deficits, with estimated billing and lack of adequate metering remaining persistent challenges.
- Analyses suggest little or no meaningful increase in electricity supply in some regions despite privatization, with fatal gaps in generation capacity, inadequate investment in infrastructure, and inefficient distribution practices.

Furthermore, broader assessments highlight that post-privatization reforms have not sufficiently resolved systemic issues such as gas supply disruptions, transmission bottlenecks, and structural inefficiencies. These challenges keep generation capacity low relative to demand and contribute to frequent outages and unreliable service delivery.

National Bureau of Statistics data indicates that electricity access in the FCT improved only marginally between 2013 and 2025, with limited improvements in generation output and reliability. Despite generation increases relative to earlier years, FCT residents still experience limited hours of power supply.

The literature identifies more broadly several persistent barriers affecting electricity quality in the FCT and Nigeria:

First is that generation remains insufficient relative to demand, frequently hampered by gas supply disruptions, pipeline vandalism, and poor plant maintenance; second is the limited and outdated transmission infrastructure that reduces the ability to evacuate generated power to end users, contributing to service unreliability; thirdly, is that the distribution companies have continued to struggle with losses, inadequate metering, and financial constraints that undermine service delivery; the weak regulatory enforcement, billing inefficiencies, and high debt profiles constrain investment and sustainable operations; and rapid urbanization, population growth, and expanding energy demand that create additional strain on already inadequate electricity infrastructure.

Some studies also emphasize that privatization may have created new private monopolies, as restructuring replaced a public monopoly with private entities that still control market segments, often without sufficient competition to drive performance improvements.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component involved the analysis of primary data obtained through structured questionnaires, while the qualitative component drew on secondary sources such as scholarly literature, official reports, time-series data, and other relevant documentary materials. The use of a mixed research design was considered appropriate as it enables a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research problem by triangulating evidence from multiple sources.

The population of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was estimated at 4,209,940 according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2025). Of this figure, 3,067,500 individuals are aged 18 years and above and have access to electricity. This population is distributed across the six area councils as follows: Abaji (127,900), Abuja Municipal Area Council AMAC (1,693,400), Bwari (500,100), Gwagwalada (346,000), Kuje (212,100), and Kwali (188,000). The study population comprises electricity consumers within the FCT, as well as staff of the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC), the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), and the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) operating within the FCT.

The sample size representative of the target population in this study is 400. It is determined using Taro Yamane's formula as follows.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where N= population

e= level of significance. This is a constant figure of 0.05

In applying the formula to determine the sample size, this process is followed

$$n = \frac{3{,}067{,}500}{1 + 3{,}067{,}500\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3{,}067{,}500}{3{,}067{,}501\text{X}0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{3{,}067{,}500}{7{,}668.7525}$$

n = 400 (Sample Size)

This study employed both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The primary data were obtained through the administration of questionnaires and the conduct of interviews. Of the 400 respondents selected for the study, 394 were administered questionnaires, while in-depth interviews were conducted with 6 respondents.

Secondary data were sourced from relevant documents, including reports on power sector privatization and government intervention policies aimed at improving electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Data analysis was carried out using simple percentages and tabular presentations for the quantitative data, while content analysis was applied to the qualitative and secondary data. The adoption of these analytical tools facilitated the generation of objective and reliable information on the subject matter. Information obtained from secondary sources was systematically analyzed using textual and content analytical techniques to complement the findings from the primary data.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study, drawing on the analysis of responses obtained from the questionnaires distributed and the interviews conducted among the respondents.

Table 1.1 Showing Number of Questionnaire Returned

S/n	Name of Institution	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	Questionnaire Not Returned
	Abaji Area Council (Staff of AEDC)	90	90	0

	Abuja Municipal Area Council (Staff of AEDC, TCN & NERC)	120	118	2
	Bwari Area Council (Staff of AEDC)	51	51	0
	Gwagwalada Area Council (Staff of AEDC)	16	16	0
	Kuje Area Council (Staff of AEDC)	58	58	0
	Kwali Area Council (Staff of AEDC)	59	59	0
		394	392	2

Source: Field Survey, September, 2025

Table 1.1 shows the distribution and retrieval rate of questionnaires across the six Area Councils in the Federal Capital Territory. In Abaji Area Council, 90 questionnaires were distributed and all were returned. In the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), 120 questionnaires were administered, of which 118 were returned, while 2 were not retrieved. In Bwari Area Council, 51 questionnaires were distributed and all were returned. Similarly, in Gwagwalada Area Council, all 16 questionnaires administered were returned. In Kuje Area Council, 59 questionnaires were distributed and all were retrieved, while in Kwali Area Council, 59 questionnaires were also distributed and fully returned.

Table 1.2: Condition of the Power Sector Pre and Post- Privatization in Relation to Power Supply in the Federal Capital Territory

S/N		SD	D	Neutral	SA	A
1.	Inefficiency is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria	18 4,5%	42 10.5%	20 2%	250 67.5%	62 15.5%
2.	Looting of funds allocated to the power sector is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria	50 12.5%	60 15%	42 10.7%	220 60%	20 5%
3.	Inefficiency is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria	44 11%	81 20.7%	73 18.25%	122 32%	72 18%
4.	Even after privatization, one of the conditions of power supply in the FCT is its epileptic nature	60 15%	20 5%	50 12.5%	192 48.9%	70 17.5%
5.	Another conditions of power supply in the FCT is high tariff	10 2.6%	42 10.5%	18 4%	250 67.5%	62 15.5%

Source: Field Survey, November, 2025

In an attempt to examine the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria, the study shows that 68% of the respondents agreed to the fact that inefficiency is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria, while the remaining 15% disagreed to this fact while 2.6 were neutral. A conclusion can therefore be made that inefficiency is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria.

Also, it was discovered that 72% of the respondents were of the perception that looting of funds allocated to the power sector is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria, while the 17.5.0% of the respondents perceived otherwise and 10.7 were neutral. Therefore, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents agreed to the fact that looting of funds allocated to the power sector is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria.

Furthermore, it was gathered that 50.5% of the respondents were of the impression that inefficiency is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria, while the remaining 31.7% of the respondents were of a different impression and 18.25 were neutral. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that inefficiency is one of the factors that necessitated the power sector reforms in Nigeria.

From the information, it was gathered that 50% of the respondents of the notion that even after privatization, one of the conditions of power supply in the FCT is its epileptic nature, while the remaining 20% of the respondents were of a different notion, while 30% were neutral. Therefore, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents agreed to this notion that in spite of the privatization exercise power supply in the FCT is still epileptic.

Also, it was discovered that 83% of the respondents agreed to the fact that another conditions of power supply in the FCT is high tariff, 52% of the respondents disagreed while the remaining 4% were neutral. With this inference, it can be concluded that high tariff is one of the banes of the power sector in spite of the reforms of the sector.

Results from In-depth Interviews

Objective One seeks to examine the condition of the power sector pre and post- privatization in relation to power supply in the Federal Capital Territory.

According Mahammed Garuba (pseudo name) a staff of Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC):

> At a point, the power sector in the country became ailing and this affected the sector a great deal. Chief among the reasons why the sector became comatose was inefficiency of the staff. The staff of the power sector in Nigeria were incapable of delivering steady power supply for the country. Majority of the staff were employed based on federal character and quota system making that aspect of the civil service which was supposed to be technically inclined to beg for technical and professional attention.

In line with the point made by Garuba above, Bangbose Alake an AEDC staff is of the view that:

> A challenge that was very conspicuous in the power sector was nepotism. In Nigeria, as we say it in colloquial language ‘man know man’, is a big problem. That has affected the power sector in that it made the sector to be replete with people that are grossly incompetent for the job. Nepotism is a big challenge militating against the growth and development of all aspects of the nation’s life and the power sector is not an exception.

Another view that was pushed forward by Emeka Nwankwo a business operator and a consumer/customer is that:

> The major factor that necessitated the privatisation of the power sector in Nigeria was corruption. Corruption is the bane of Nigeria’s socio-economic development and it affects all aspects of the

> Nigerian society power sector inclusive. The power sector before privatization was like a conduit pipe used to fleece away the resources of the country.

However, Margaret Anunobi a staff of Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Nurudeen Adebayo a consumer/customer and Hasana Lukas a consumer/customer are of the view that the before the privatisation of the power sector, the Nigerian government claimed to have spent 6 billion dollars on the sector yet there was sign that the sector has gulped such a huge amount because there was no much difference due to the fact that there was still no light.

For Anunobi:

> The power sector was privatised because of the brazen corrupt practices in the sector. A situation where public office holders can just dip hands into the public treasury and take as much money as they want and stash the proceeds of such corrupt practices abroad is worrisome and the power sector is not an exception because the same thing took place in the sector. In fact the power sector was a conduit pipe used to siphon money from the coffers of the nation.

In his view, Lukas argues that:

> The reforms in the power were necessary because of the monumental corruption in the system. Nigeria before the reforms was haemorrhaging and bleeding to death as a result of corruption. Corruption permeates all aspects of the nation's economy not just the power sector and that has been a beast of burden that Nigeria is carrying. The only way Nigeria can attain its pride of place among the committee of nations is for the elites to become selfless and committed to the Nigerian project. Nigeria should be respected and feared by nations across Africa, Europe and America because of her contribution to peace keeping role across the world and how it has held Africa together. But that respect can only come when we have respected ourselves enough to shun corruption and make it a capital offence.

Lastly, Adebayo enthused that:

> The reforms in the power sector were necessitated because of the baggage of corruption that is hanging on our neck. The nation can still retrace its steps if there is a commitment on the part of the leaders and the people to turn over a new leaf. Until we agree as a people to shun corruption, it will continue to be our greatest undoing and the international community will never take us serious.

Table 1.3: Factors hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT

		S.D	D	Neutral	S.A	A
6.	One of the greatest challenges of power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT is energy theft	16 4%	40 10%	16 4%	248 62%	60 20%
7.	Corruption is a great challenge of power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT	48 12%	58 14.5%	48 12%	218 56.5%	18 4.5%

8.	Lack of transmission of enough energy to be distributed is a challenge of power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT	42 10.5%	87 23.75%	73 17.75%	120 30%	70 17.5%
9.	Lack of generation of enough energy for distribution is another challenge of power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT	58 14.5%	18 4.5%	48 12%	198 52%	68 17%
10.	High tariff is another challenge of power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT	16 4%	40 10%	16 4%	248 67%	60 15%

Source: Field Survey, November, 2025

Objective two seeks to examine the factors hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring adequate electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).The study shows that 82% of the respondents were of the impression that one of the greatest challenges hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT is energy theft, 14% of the respondents were of a different impression while the remaining 4% were indifferent. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that one of the greatest challenges hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT is energy theft.

Also, it was discovered that 61% of the respondents were of the notion that corruption is a great challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT, 16.5% of the respondents were of a different notion while the remaining 12% were indifferent. Invariably, it can be concluded that corruption is a great challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT.

Furthermore, it was gathered that 47.5% of the respondents agreed to the fact that lack of transmission of enough energy to be distributed is a challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT, 34% of the respondents disagreed to this fact while the remaining 17.5% were indifferent. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that lack of transmission of enough energy to be distributed is a challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT.

From the information, 69% of the respondents agreed to the fact that lack of generation of enough energy for distribution is another challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT, 17.0% of the respondents disagreed while the remaining 12% were neutral. Therefore, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents agreed that lack of generation of enough energy for distribution is another challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT.

Furthermore, the study shows that 82% of the respondents were of the impression that high tariff is another challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT, 14% of the respondents were of a different impression while the remaining 4% were indifferent. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that high tariff is another challenge hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT.

Results from In-depth Interviews

During data collection, respondents were asked to explain factors constraining the performance of the power sector in its effort to ensure efficient and sustainable electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

According to one of the interviewees named Mahammed Garuba (pseudo name), a staff of Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC):

> The factors hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory among others is generation-related factors such as low generation capacity compared to national demand, gas supply disruptions and pipeline vandalism affecting gas-fired plants, poor maintenance of power plants and limited use of renewable energy (solar, hydro, wind) despite Abuja's potential.

Consistent with the argument put forward by Garuba, Bangbose Alake, a staff member of the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC), opines that:

> Another challenge hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory is transmission constraints including aging and weak transmission infrastructure managed by the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), frequent grid collapses leading to nationwide blackouts that affect Abuja, transmission bottlenecks that limit evacuation of generated power to the FCT and inadequate expansion to match Abuja's rapid urban growth.

Another perspective advanced by Emeka Nwankwo, a business operator and electricity consumer, is that:

> The major factor hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory is distribution challenges including but not limited to high technical losses (old lines, overloaded transformers) and commercial losses (energy theft, illegal connections), incomplete metering coverage, leaving many customers on estimated billing, insufficient investment in distribution infrastructure to keep pace with new estates and satellite towns (e.g., Lugbe, Kubwa, Gwagwalada) and low fault response time in some parts of the city.

> However, Margaret Anunobi, a staff member of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Nurudeen Adebayo, an electricity consumer, and Hasana Lukas, also an electricity consumer, expressed the following views: One of the factors hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory is financial problems. These problems include but not limited to tariffs often below cost-reflective levels, making investment unattractive, huge debts across the electricity value chain (DisCos owing GenCos, GenCos owed by NBET), poor revenue collection due to electricity theft and non-payment (including by some government agencies in Abuja) and dependence on government bailouts, creating financial instability.

In his view, Lukas argues that:

> Another factor hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory is regulatory and policy issues. These issues comprise of weak enforcement of performance standards by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), monopoly of Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC), leaving consumers with no alternatives, policy inconsistency, tariff freezes, subsidy reversals, and frequent changes

in government intervention programs and corruption and mismanagement in parts of the sector.

Finally, Adebayo, a consumer of electricity, observed that:

> A factor hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory is socio-economic and demographic pressures. These factors are; rapid population growth in Abuja increasing electricity demand beyond supply growth, expansion of new estates, industrial clusters, and informal settlements that strain the grid and widespread reliance on alternative power (generators, inverters, solar), which masks the urgency of fixing the grid.

Table 1.4: Effect of implementation of privatization policy on the quality of power supply in the Federal Capital Territory

		S.D	D	Neutral	S.A	A
11.	The privatization of the power sector does not have much effect because the unbundling of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) into generation companies (GenCos), distribution companies (DisCos), and the Transmission Company of Nigeria	38 9.5%	11 2.75%	61 15.50%	250 62.5%	32 8%
12.	The Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) was granted the mandate to distribute power to the FCT and parts of Niger, Kogi, and Nasarawa states, yet power supply is still epileptic	20 5.10%	7 1.75%	74 18.5%	270 64.25%	21 5.25%
13.	The key objective of privatisation was to improve efficiency, attract investment, reduce power shortages and enhance service delivery to households and businesses but this objective has not been achieved yet	44 11%	41 10.5%	72 18%	213 53.25%	22 5.5%
14.	Cost-reflective tariffs have been introduced, but many consumers complain of rising electricity bills without commensurate improvement in supply	16 4%	12 3%	77 19.25%	270 64.25%	17 4.25%
15.	While prepaid meters are available, many consumers in the FCT are still subjected to estimated billing	30 7.7%	11 2.75%	69 17.25%	250 62.5%	32 8%
16.	The privatisation of Nigeria's power sector, as implemented in the FCT, has yielded modest infrastructural improvements but has largely failed to deliver reliable, affordable and high-quality power supply	28 7%	7 1.75%	74 18.5%	270 64.25%	21 5.25%

Source: Field Survey, November, 2025

The third objective sought to examine whether the implementation of the power sector privatization policy has affected the quality of electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The findings indicate that 70.5% of respondents believed that privatization has had little impact on power supply. This perception was largely attributed to the unbundling of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) into generation companies (GenCos), distribution companies (DisCos), and the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN). Meanwhile, 12% of respondents expressed the view that privatization has significantly influenced power supply, and

15% remained neutral. It can therefore, be concluded that the privatization of the power sector has had limited impact on the quality of electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory, largely due to the unbundling of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) into generation companies (GenCos), distribution companies (DisCos), and the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN).

In addition, the study found that 69.5% of the respondents were of the view that the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) was granted the mandate to distribute power to the FCT and parts of Niger, Kogi, and Nasarawa states, yet power supply is still epileptic, while 6.85% of the respondents were of a different notion and 18.5 of the respondents were neutral. Invariably, it can be concluded that the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) was granted the mandate to distribute power to the FCT and parts of Niger, Kogi, and Nasarawa states, yet power supply is still epileptic.

Furthermore, the study showed that 58.75% of the respondents agreed to the fact that the key objective of privatization was to improve efficiency, attract investment, reduce power shortages and enhance service delivery to households and businesses but this objective has not been achieved yet, 20.5% of the respondents disagreed to this fact and the remaining 18% were neutral. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that the key objective of privatization was to improve efficiency, attract investment, reduce power shortages and enhance service delivery to households and businesses but this objective has not been achieved yet.

The study also showed that 68.5% of the respondents were of the impression that cost-reflective tariffs have been introduced, but many consumers complain of rising electricity bills without commensurate improvement in supply, 4.0% of the respondents were of a different impression while the remaining 19.25% were neutral. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that cost-reflective tariffs have been introduced, but many consumers complain of rising electricity bills without commensurate improvement in supply.

Furthermore, the study found that 70.5% of respondents indicated that, despite the availability of prepaid meters, many consumers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) continue to experience estimated billing. Meanwhile, 10.2% of respondents held a contrary view, and 17.25% remained indifferent. These findings suggest that, although prepaid meters have been introduced, a significant proportion of consumers in the FCT are still subjected to estimated billing.

Finally, the study indicated that privatization of Nigeria's power sector, as implemented in the FCT, has yielded modest infrastructural improvements but has largely failed to deliver reliable, affordable and high-quality power supply. Based on the data above, 69.5% of respondents agreed, 8.75% held a differing view, while 18.5% remained neutral. These findings indicate that the privatization of Nigeria's power sector, as implemented in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), has led to modest infrastructural improvements but has largely failed to provide reliable, affordable, and high-quality electricity supply.

Implementation of Power Sector Privatization and Its Impact on the Quality of Electricity Supply in the Federal Capital Territory

This section examines the implementation of power sector privatization and its impact on the quality of electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It presents findings from the study, based on the perceptions of electricity consumers, as well as insights from key stakeholders in the sector, to assess whether privatization has led to improvements in reliability, affordability, and overall service delivery. When respondents were asked to explain how the implementation of power sector privatization and its impact on the quality of electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory, Mohammed Garuba had this to say:

> The Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) has invested in new substations, transformers, and distribution lines, especially in fast-growing satellite towns like Kubwa, Lugbe, and Gwagwalada. Introduction of prepaid meters has reduced estimated billing and given consumers more control over electricity usage. Privatization introduced complaint resolution platforms, digital bill payments, and service centres, which improved responsiveness compared to PHCN. Some areas in Abuja now benefit from automated fault detection, smart meters, and digital monitoring systems. While still unstable, average daily supply in Abuja is better than pre-2013 levels in some districts (Central Business District, Maitama, Wuse).

Bangbose Alake affirmed that:

> Despite privatization, outages and load shedding remain common, especially in satellite towns like Nyanya, Kuje, and Karu. Electricity tariffs have risen significantly, yet many consumers feel supply quality has not improved in line with costs. Large numbers of customers are still on estimated billing, leading to disputes. Since the Transmission Company of Nigeria remains government-owned, frequent grid collapses continue to disrupt supply in the FCT. Unlike telecoms, where privatization created competition, Abuja residents rely solely on AEDC, meaning there is no consumer choice.

On his part, Emeka Nwankwoargues that:

> The privatization policy has produced incremental improvements in infrastructure, metering, and customer service, but it has not fundamentally solved the problem of unreliable power supply in Abuja. Quality of supply has improved slightly in wealthier and high-demand areas (e.g., Maitama, Asokoro, CBD), but in many satellite towns and low-income areas, residents still depend heavily on generators, solar panels, and inverters.

In response to the question regarding whether the implementation of power sector privatization has positively affected the quality of electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Margaret Anunobi, Nurudeen Adebayo, and Hasana Lukas expressed the view that privatization has led to partial improvements. However, they noted that these gains have been uneven and slow, and are often overshadowed by persistent challenges such as inadequate generation, weak transmission infrastructure, and limited competition. Anunobi explained that:

> Privatization has partially improved the quality of power supply in the FCT, but the gains have been uneven, slow, and overshadowed by persistent issues of inadequate generation, weak transmission, and lack of competition".

Lukas argues that:

> The implementation of privatization in the FCT has had positive impacts in terms of infrastructure expansion, improved billing systems, digital customer engagement and modest improvement in supply reliability. However, the progress is slower than expected because of transmission bottlenecks, financial constraints, and regulatory weaknesses.

> In line with the views of the respondents above, Adebayo argued that: The privatization of Nigeria's power sector, as implemented in the FCT, has yielded modest infrastructural improvements but has largely failed to deliver reliable, affordable and high-quality power supply. While privatization created opportunities for private investment, structural challenges (transmission bottlenecks, regulatory weaknesses, and inadequate generation) continue to undermine service delivery.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined the implications of government intervention policies on the privatization of the power sector in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The discussion of the findings is organized under the following thematic headings:

Condition of the power sector pre and post- privatization in relation to power supply in the Federal Capital Territory

The first objective of the study is to examine the condition of the power sector pre and post-privatization. It can be seen from content analysis that before privatization, the power sector was in a bad shape, particularly in the FCT. This was the stand of the findings which is heavily on the fact that the reforms in the power sector were necessitated because of the baggage of corruption that is hanging on our neck. The respondents agreed that the nation can still retrace its steps if there is a commitment on the part of the leaders and the people to turn over a new leaf. Until we agree as a people to shun corruption, it will continue to be our greatest undoing and the international community will never take us seriously.

This was corroborated by Omoyefa (2020) who affirmed that it is self-evident that before privatization of the power sector particularly in the FCT, the sector was in a state of quagmire. He further explains that the poor performance of the power sector in Nigeria has been a significant barrier to private investment in the country, the overall development and economic growth. The dissatisfaction with the performance of PHCN – symptomized by its low capacity generation; high costs; inadequate distribution of electric power; inability to finance new or expanded infrastructure; and inadequate machinery for effective billing and collection of bills fuelled the debate on the theoretical and empirical justification for its involvement in Nigeria's electricity power sector, and became the driving force behind liberalization and privatization. Assessing the post-privatization era, Edet and Akpan (2016) evaluated the impact of the privatization of the power sector and argued that reform did not have significant impact on electricity supply in Nigeria though it possesses positive coefficient.

Factors hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT

The second objective of the study is to examine the factors hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the FCT. It can be seen from data collected from the field that the factors hindering performance of the power sector in ensuring power supply in the Federal Capital Territory among others is generation-related factors such as low generation capacity compared to national demand, gas supply disruptions and pipeline vandalism affecting gas-fired plants, poor maintenance of power plants and limited use of renewable energy (solar, hydro, wind) despite Abuja's potential. Other factors include but not limited to generation-related factors, transmission constraints, distribution challenges, financial problems regulatory and policy issues and socio-economic and demographic pressures.

This was corroborated by Ohajianya and Owate (2014), who conducted a study titled: "Erratic Power Supply in Nigeria: Causes and Solutions". Through the use of secondary method of data collection, the study shows that, the factors of erratic power supply in Nigeria include the

government's inconsistent and misguided power reform policies; inefficiency in power generation, transmission, distribution and consumption, and an incompetent workforce of the energy companies. Recommendations towards the erratic power supply problem were proffered. One of the ways to encourage shift from the use of energy inefficient electric devices like incandescent bulbs, old model refrigerators, computers and televisions, to the use of energy efficient LED bulbs, modern refrigerators, computers and televisions recommendations is the adoption of energy conservative policies such as policies.

Effect of implementation of privatization policy on the quality of power supply in the Federal Capital Territory

The third objective of the study is to examine the effect of the implementation of privatization policy on the quality of power supply in the Federal Capital Territory. It was noticed from the research that the privatization of Nigeria's power sector, as implemented in the FCT, has yielded modest infrastructural improvements but has largely failed to deliver reliable, affordable and high-quality power supply. While privatization created opportunities for private investment, structural challenges (transmission bottlenecks, regulatory weaknesses, and inadequate generation) continue to undermine service delivery.

Corroborating the findings above, Ugochukwu and Bello (2020) worked on the study titled: "Effect of Privatization on the Quality of Performance by the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company". The study was conducted on consumers and employees of Abuja electricity distribution Company. A self-administered questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument and data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 18. The study aimed at investigating the effect of privatization on organization performance with a particular reference to Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC). It was found that power is considered as a major instrument and driver for economic development. A nation that cannot generate enough electricity to power its nascent industries will remain at the fulcrums of economic quagmires. The study revealed that Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) has not significantly improved power supply to its customers. It was recommended that the management of AEDC should provide their customers with transformers and meters in order to improve the supply of electricity. The only weakness of the study in my view, is that it made no reference to power supply in the FCT.

The findings can be summarized as follows: Analysis of the data indicates that transmission constraints remain a major challenge in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Key issues include aging and weak transmission infrastructure managed by the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), frequent grid collapses resulting in widespread blackouts that affect Abuja, transmission bottlenecks that limit the evacuation of generated power to the FCT, and inadequate expansion of the network to keep pace with Abuja's rapid urban growth

. Other factors include but are not limited to generation-related factors, transmission constraints, distribution challenges, financial problems regulatory and policy issues and socio-economic and demographic pressures.

Another key finding is that the implementation of power sector privatization in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) has yielded positive outcomes, including infrastructure expansion, improved billing systems, enhanced digital customer engagement, and modest improvements in supply reliability. However, these gains have progressed more slowly than anticipated, primarily due to persistent transmission bottlenecks, financial constraints, and regulatory weaknesses.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. To overcome the challenges of the pre and post-privatization of the power sector reforms in Nigeria and FCT in particular, a holistic privatization devoid of government intervention

should be made applicable to the sector. In this regard, government ownership of TCN needs be jettisoned to fully accommodate liberalization tenets and flourishing of a competitive business environment in the industry. Hopefully, the brusque perception of some foreign investors about the country's industry milieu would somewhat change and thereby enhanced its prospect.

2. To address the factors hindering the performance of the power sector in ensuring reliable electricity supply in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the Meter Asset Programme (MAP) should be implemented without delay to provide prepaid metering to all customers, thereby reducing billing issues and limiting the accumulation of outstanding debts. Additionally, other critical challenges including generation-related constraints, transmission bottlenecks, distribution inefficiencies, financial limitations, regulatory and policy gaps, as well as socio-economic and demographic pressures should be urgently addressed to improve overall power sector performance.
3. Government should consolidate on the gains in the power sector as a result of the implementation of the privatization policy. These gains include infrastructure expansion, improved billing systems, digital customer engagement and modest improvement in supply reliability.

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